

CITY VIEW

City of Hamilton Planning and Development Department

1996

This Issue of "City View" is About
PEOPLE AND PUBLIC SPACES

STAGE:

A Typical downtown Hamilton street. The display windows of the street level shops are used as back projection screens for slides.

ACTORS:

Donna is an urban designer working for The City Planning Department.
 Linda is a friend of Donna's.

Donna: WELCOME TO OUR LIVING ROOM!

Linda: What living room where is the living room?

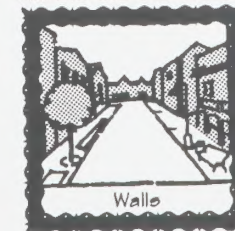
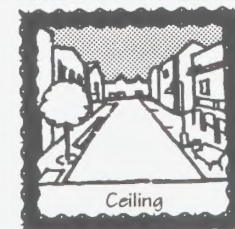
Donna: Right here, where we are. You see, our city is our home and all the streets, squares, parks and spaces between buildings are our COMMUNITY LIVING ROOM.

Linda: Hmmm, never thought about it that way.

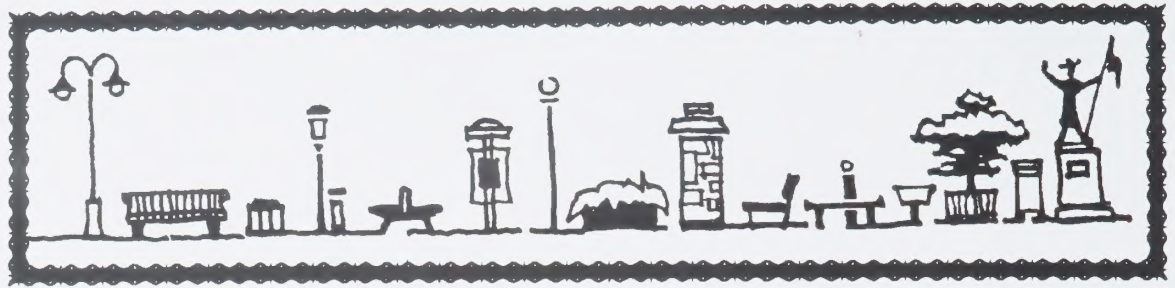
Donna: Let me show you. Just like our personal living rooms, the community living room has a floor, ceiling and walls.

The floor can be made from many different materials -hard, soft, with different colours and patterns. The buildings surrounding the public spaces are the walls.

The ceiling starts where the walls end. In our public living room, the height of the ceiling is given by the height of the buildings.



HAMILTON'S PLAN FOR TOMORROW



Of course, as in any other living room, we have to have furniture so we can sit, talk, have a drink, have a bite, relax, read a book or a newspaper.

We also need many little conveniences, such as trash receptacles, to keep our living room clean, telephones so we can communicate, and a variety of sources of information.

After sunset, we need good lighting to provide safety and to enhance the beauty and uniqueness of the place.

And finally, an important part of every living room is its decoration and art objects, a desired source of inspiration and an enrichment of our lives.



Linda: Well, it all sounds very interesting, but I'm not sure like what I see. If this is a living room, it's a very untidy living room.

Donna: Right, and that's why I brought you here. With your help and that of other citizens, we can make a difference. So, how can we make things better and what should we do first? Any suggestions?

Linda: Well, I guess the first thing to do would be to get rid of the clutter. Make it a little bit neater, sort of.

Donna: O.K., sounds reasonable to me. We need coordination and a plan of where to put what. We do not want our living room to be a basement recreation room. Is there anything else to be improved?

Linda: Oh yes, you mentioned something about lighting during the evening and night. I think it's not only a matter of enough light to ensure safety and orientation but a matter of making places more exciting and inviting.

Donna: Good idea. Hamilton hosts many international conferences and boasts first class cultural facilities which draw an endless stream of visitors. Where can they go after five? Indeed, we need a bright lights district. What else?



Linda: It just occurred to me that we should also think about how our community living room is used during all four seasons.

Donna: You're absolutely right. Our community living room is an open air public space. In our climatic zone, we have long winters and many days of miserable weather. Yet we build our public spaces as if we were living in an eternal summer.

Linda: Then what's the point of having a living room if it can be used and enjoyed for only a limited time?



Donna: Exactly. Public spaces are very expensive. By planning and designing for only one season, we are wasting our taxpayers' dollars. We always have to keep our climate in mind and always take into consideration the elements of the weather. We definitely need the sun's warmth in the winter time, a lot of cool shadows during the hot summer, and screens and shelters against the wind, rain and snow.

Linda: But how can we do that?

Donna: Well, there are many time-honoured ways of improving pedestrian comfort. For example, since ancient times, colonnades, canopies and free standing shelters were used to protect against excess solar heat and inclement weather.

Linda: I guess it makes a lot of sense to use the experience of previous generations, but how we can take advantage of the winter sun?

Donna: First of all, we must not obstruct it. In our northern location, the low winter sun casts long shadows. We must make sure that our community living room has enough direct sunlight. We do it by adjusting the permitted height of surrounding buildings.

Linda: But there will always be a market for large, multistory buildings.

Donna: Of course, and there will always be a place for them. We have to bear in mind, however, that every building has a cold side, i.e. the area which is permanently overshadowed, as well as a warm, sunny side. A careful impact assessment would help us find many right answers, such as, is this the best location for a park or for parking?

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Linda: It seems to me that planning and designing for only the summer season also is a disadvantage for the elderly and the disabled, confining them to the prison of their homes during the rest of the year.

Donna: You are absolutely right. It seems that our public places are being built for young athletes. Of course, it can be great fun to jump over mountains of snow and mini lakes of salt. But how about the rest of us? Indeed, during the winter, a large number of our citizens are prisoners in their own homes. Year round accessibility and comfort is a prerequisite for calling our public spaces our community living room. Well, this has been a very interesting chat, and we have both obviously learned a lot. However, this should not be the end of the discussion.

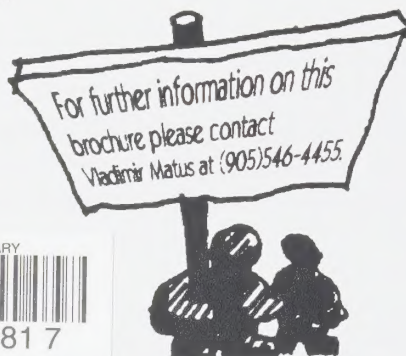


Linda: We should involve others.

Donna: O.K. let's shout together!

(Donna and Linda turn to the audience)

Donna and Linda: Citizens of our community! Tell us what you like and what you don't like about our public spaces. What is your Vision for our public spaces? What can we do to make us proud of our **COMMUNITY LIVING ROOM?**



Linda: Oh, by the way, maybe we should have these ideas part of into our Official Plan.

Donna: Right on!

CITYVIEW

CityView Hamilton's Plan for Tomorrow is your opportunity to present your ideas and thoughts on the future of Hamilton.

Your ideas will ultimately form the basis of a new Official Plan for the City of Hamilton.

Staff of Hamilton's Planning and Development Department are available to answer your questions on any facet of CityView.

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